MECA Matters

Metropolitan Emergency Communications Agency,
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

Sept-Oct 2009

Unknown Fact:

MECA has a staff of 22 employees and supports 100 Public Safety and Public Service Agencies. These 100 agencies consist of approximately 9,700 customers who utilize 11,500 radios, 7,530 pagers and cellular devices, 2,152 Mobile Data terminals, 169 computers, and Fire House Alerting Equipment for 70 Fire Houses. MECA maintains 11 radio tower sites and supports 7 public safety answering points (PSAP), including a backup PSAP.

Inside this issue:

Radio Reprogramming:

In September, MECA began radio programming for all of its customers. Programming a radio takes approximately 20 minutes and encompasses two steps. The first step is a firmware update that improves the performance of the radio in high noise environments. The second step is the removal of the analog talkgroups and the insertion of new and updated templates. Programming is scheduled carefully to accommodate agency size; however, wait times for programming are dependant on the number of customers who arrive simultaneously.

Customer provided feedback on the performance of the radio with the new firmware has been very positive.

The fire departments were programmed first, followed by IMPD. Constable Offices, School Police, City agencies, MCSD and other law enforcement agencies are still being scheduled for programming.

Prior to an agency being programmed, CAD information is sent to the agency to correct any discrepancies found in CAD and the radio database. This ensures that the documentation for the radio assignment is correct, which in turn, ensures that the correct user is identified when they key up.

Melissa Serban, MECA's Customer Service and Project Manager, is leading this project and working with each agency to get scheduled for reprogramming. For questions relating to this programming, contact Melissa Serban at 327.1471 or at serban@indy.gov.

From left, Crime Lab employees Marilyn Schaler, Don Toth, MECA Director Ray Raney, Melissa Wilson and David Lucas wait while Crime Lab radios are being programmed at MECA.

MECA's Commitment to Customer Service

Immediately upon his arrival at MECA in 2005, Director Ray Raney made improving Customer Service his first priority. Director Raney created two positions, Customer Service Manager and Customer Service Coordinator, and revamped the Customer Service Desk to respond more effectively and efficiently to customer issues. During his tenure, MECA and its customers have seen vast improvements in customer involvement, communications, solutions, and partnerships.

Melissa Serban is MECA's Customer Service Manager. Serban is charged with addressing customer issues, coordinating implementation of customer initiatives, and acts as facilitator for MECA Customers with their communication needs.

It is our pleasure to serve you. Our mission is to provide those who serve and protect the citizens of Marion County with the safest and most reliable communications system available. We invite you to contact Serban for any issues at 327.1471 or at seban@indy.gov.

MECA Customer Wall:

MECA is in the process of decorating the conference room wall with customer agency decals. We would like to have every agency represented on the wall. MECA would like to include both public safety and public service. If your agency has a decal that you can provide us, please send it to MECA 47 S. State Avenue, 46201 attention Mike Lingle.

CAD Project Status:

A CAD Project Manager has been selected and the City/County Purchasing Division is working with the consulting company on contractual matters. Upon contract approval by the MECA Board, MECA will begin developing a CAD User Group. This user group will consist of front-line users, dispatchers, and other system experts. The User Group will assist in developing the list of functional user requirements. When these requirements have been identified, risks and other threats have been assessed, a Request for Proposal will be issued for the CAD Project.

If you have a question regarding MECA or a story idea, please contact the MECA Matters editor, Melissa Serban at 317-327-1471 or serban@indy.gov

More Changes at MECA!

The MECA Board has recently approved the hiring of three new full-time employees. It is our pleasure to introduce Courtney Morgan, Kyle Cheney and Mike Lingle.

Courtney Morgan is the most visible of our new hires, and is employed as one of MECA's Customer Service Desk System Technicians. Courtney completed her training at the desk and can be found working from 11 pm to 7 am two nights a week and from 3pm to 11 pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Courtney most recently was employed as an EMT.

Kyle Cheney was hired as MECA's Hardware and Network Administrator and will assist in activities such as network configuration and desktop support. Kyle is a recent graduate of IUPUI with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Computer Science.

Mike Lingle is MECA's new Planning and Training Coordinator. Mike will be a participant in many of the MECA projects and will be overseeing the communications efforts for the 2012 Super Bowl on behalf of MECA. Mike has worked in the pharmaceutical industry for twelve years.

Sandy Campbell, though not a new employee, is now responsible for managing the Fire Records System, in addition to Police Records.

Please join us in welcoming our new employees.

From left, Kyle Cheney, Mike Lingle, Courtney Morgan and Sandy Campbell.

PSAP Consolidation Update

The City of Indianapolis has started working towards compliance with the new legislative bill passed earlier this year that requires dispatch center consolidation by December 31, 2014. Under this state law, a dispatch center (PSAP) is defined as the location in which a 911 call is answered and the appropriate response is dispatched. MECA has been facilitating dialogue between the City, Town and County Executives to determine how to best meet the requirements set forth by the legislature and determine whether consolidation should be Countywide or Regional. At this time, MECA will be proceeding with a Countywide PSAP consolidation approach. MECA has met three times with Marion County agency heads to discuss the implications of the new state law. Currently, there are 7 PSAPs (IMC, Beech Grove, Speedway, City of Lawrence, IUPUI, the Airport and Perry) in Marion County. Under this law, the Indianapolis Airport and IUPUI are exempt from the consolidation. MECA has currently identified eight potential solutions for consolidation, which run the gamut from complete dispatch consolidation under the Marion County Sheriff's Department at our current location, to co-locating. There may be federal grants available for remodeling a different location to house the larger dispatch, or those same funds could be used to renovate our current building, but again, these are all unknowns at this point.

The Future of Mobile Data

The current mobile data system was originally installed for Law Enforcement in 1993 and for Fire Departments in 1996. The system resides on a Motorola RD-Lap platform that will no longer be supported beyond December 2012. At this time, mobile data for law enforcement transmits and receives off one antenna located at Willard Park . (The fire community was upgraded to four sites in 2007). Even if the current system was going to be supported longer than 2012, the single tower does not provide adequate coverage for the entire law enforcement community and is not robust enough to support the current demands on the system.

Newer technology currently available would enable the user to receive mug shots, streaming video, fingerprints, and BMV pictures; however, these applications require a much greater bandwidth than is currently possible on our system.

MECA is currently working with ISA to institute a test Wi-Fi in the Indianapolis downtown area and will be meeting with an expert mobile data consultant to begin exploring the feasibility and best options for Indianapolis. This mobile data project will be dependant on the CAD project, as the information that is pushed over mobile data often comes from the CAD system.